

VADER-ENCHANTED VALLEY WATER SYSTEM NEWSLETTER



Lewis County Public Works, 2025 NE Kresky Ave, Chehalis, WA 98532

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Office Hours: 8:30 AM - 4 PM, Monday - Friday

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Who Owns the Water System?

By What Gives?

Lewis County (LC) began full operation and management of the Vader-Enchanted Valley water system on January 1, 2011 as part of the State Department of Health (DOH) receivership process. The next step in the receivership process is for LC and City of Vader to determine how to transfer the ownership of the water system.

These details of the transfer will be in a "Disposition Plan" prepared by DOH. The Plan must be approved by Lewis County Superior Court before October 2011. A court hearing is tentatively scheduled for June 2011. After the hearing, LC and Vader will implement the "Plan."

One question that is frequently asked is "Can the City get the system back?" The receivership process allows this, but it is conditional upon the water system maintaining public health and safety. Some of the main conditions are: 1) It must be agreeable to both LC and City; and 2) The State Auditor's Office determines that the City is fiscally positioned to fully operate and manage the water system. These details will be in the Plan.

April 22, 2011 Water Break—not a dry run

By Oh No!

We wished it wouldn't happen, but it was inevitable, and when did emergencies ever happen at a good time? Lewis County Public Works (LCPW) responded to a water main break on April 22/Earth Day/Good Friday at 6 AM.

County Engineer Tim Elsea was called about the break at 6:15 AM, and immediately activated the Code Red system which was used to notify residents about the water break, and boil water advisory. Crews were at the site by 7AM, and completed the repair by 3:30 PM. However, Director Tim Elsea, Road Supervisor Randy Kerrigan, and Plant Operator John Strom stayed until 10:30 PM that night to bleed air out of the system and to help bring the system back online.

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National Drinking Water Week was observed May 1 through 7 this year. It is an important and difficult job to keep drinking water safe. The State Department of Health (DOH) recognizes the effort, and honors professionals and organizations that have made exceptional contributions to deliver safe, reliable drinking water.

This year, Lewis County received the 2011 "Friend of Drinking Water" award for stepping up to manage and operate the Vader water system. The community could not pay for the needed repairs and was ineligible for loans. Lewis County was able to secure about \$1.3 million in grants and low-interest loans to pay for repairs. The award was presented to the County on May 2. The award is kept at the Lewis County Courthouse.

The break occurred in a vulnerable section that had prior breaks. This was evident as the opened trench revealed 4 different types of pipes. LCPW decided to replace a long (65-ft) segment with a new valve to isolate the line in the future and to reduce the likelihood of another break. The repaired segment was flushed, two sets of water samples at 5 different locations were taken and passed before the boil water advisory was lifted at noon on Easter Sunday, April 24.

But this doesn't mean that we're out of the water yet. The system has a lot of these old brittle pipes also known as asphalt concrete or transite. Lewis County plans to replace many of these lines in the Summer

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of 2012; but until then you could see LCPW repair crews more often in town.

After the repair, LC staff met for a debriefing about things that worked and could be improved. We learned some things from this break and we would like to share that information with you.

1. **CodeRED System.** The Lewis County CodeRED system was used to contact customers about the water break. This is a system used to send critical information about disasters, evacuation, missing child alerts, and other emergencies. However, we learned you have to register your telephone number in order to get notified.

Register your telephone number and email at <http://lewiscountywa.gov/code-red>. If you do not have Internet access, then call 360-740-1152 to register.

2. **Water Conservation.** We learned that water is needed to flush and restore the system after the repair, so water conservation will be most appreciated as we fill the reservoir. It is a good idea to keep one or several containers of potable water around in case of power failure, disasters and disrupted water service. If you do so, be sure to periodically empty and re-fill your containers. A general guideline is to change the water about every 6 months.
3. **Public Posting Sites.** Whenever a boil water advisory is imposed, notification must be made to every customer. Broadcast media is an approved means of notice so tune in to KELA and KITI. We also left flyers, but we learned not every house could be accessed because of loose dogs, locked

"...We opened up the trench and saw four different types of pipe."



A picture of the burst pipe

and chained accesses, or safety.

To remedy this, there will also be 7 public posting sites: Lewis County Fire District No. 7; City Hall; Little Crane Café; Post Office; J and G Grocery; Mt St Helens Grocery; and Enchanted Valley bulletin board.

4. **Volunteers.** We were fortunate to have office staff available to pass out flyers; but we learned we could use volunteers if staff is not available.

If you are interested, please sign up at 1-855-858-2843 for a short training session and park those walking shoes by the door!

5. **Special Health Needs.** Disruption of water service has a greater impact on childcare facilities, dialysis machines, immunocompromised persons, and other vulnerable households with health issues. We learned we do not know the special needs of our served community so if water quality is of a special concern, please let us know.



Street conditions from a broken pipe.

New Service Charges and Regulations

New water service charges and regulations went into effect on April 1, 2011. Revenue generated from the utility must pay for operations, maintenance and improvements. The current rates for water service were not sufficient, and did not provide an incentive for water conservation. Charges shown in the June 2011 bills will show a base charge of \$43.50/month and a usage rate of \$6.50/1000 gallons. Some other new changes are:

- Deposit requirements for new customers.
- Removal of a shut-off fee.
- Service call charges for both normal and non-normal working hours.
- New connection charges depending upon the service line size.
- Doorhanger charge of \$25 to notify delinquent customers.

Lewis County also adopted new service regulations, which are standard for a water service provider. The main highlights are:

- Water service lines up to and including the meter box



New water service charges and regulations are effective on April 1, 2011.

- are the responsibility of the Utility.
- No tampering with service lines and appurtenances that are the Utility's responsibility.
- Water lines from the meter box to premises are the Customer's responsibility.
- Charges for unauthorized connections and uses of water.
- Shut-off service for no charge and with minimum 2 working days notice.
- Turn-off service fee of \$25 during normal working hours.
- Establishment of normal working hours and days.
- Temporary Shutoff option for customers absent for a period of up to one year.

We Want to Hear From You

Lewis County made many changes and performed maintenance on the system since January 1. To help us with our ongoing operation of the system, we want to hear from our customers about any effects on your water service. For example, a lot of air was bled out of the system which should increase the system pressure. At our public meeting held in January, some customers informed us of low water pressure in certain areas of the city. After our work, we heard that the pressure increased from 25 psi to 40 psi in these areas.

Please call us at 1-855-858-2843 or send us an email, Shirley.Kook@lewiscountywa.gov, with your comments and observations.

The Price of Clean Water

By Lady Clearwater

An article in my engineering newsletter caught my attention and affirmed the good things that we take for granted in our country. The article started as "Clean drinking water is as precious as gold to more than a billion people living in poor, undeveloped regions. Disinfecting water in clear plastic bottles left in the sun is a simple concept and an old one, but it's hard to know when the water is safe to drink..."

Viewed from that aspect, we live like royalty with our faucets and indoor plumbing. Although customers like you pay for our water system, large system improvements such as water main replacement and treatment plant improvements are only made possible

with large infusions of public funds. We are truly fortunate to have Federal and State funding agencies committed to striving for safe potable water. Private development funding is another possibility but it is rare in small rural towns.

In facing the economic realities of dwindling public funds, Lewis County realizes efficient management of the Vader system is crucial. We made some improvements that were possible due to the availability of County resources (funding and labor). As we continue with changes-- evident and behind-the-scenes, we would like to thank you for your support.

Accomplishments: Done. Check. Next.

Customers have asked us what has been done since Lewis County assumed full management and operation. Besides dealing with the water break on Earth Day and Good Friday, we have dealt with many operational and maintenance (O&M) activities since January 1, 2011:

- ☑ Mapped and verified water meters with service addresses.
- ☑ Mapped meter reading routes to improve efficiency.
- ☑ Mapping of the water lines, valves and hydrants --Ongoing as we find and learn about the system!
- ☑ Set accounts with suppliers and services.
- ☑ Developed procedures to handle work orders and problems.
- ☑ Approved State grant and loan agreements to improve the distribution system.
- ☑ Purchased specialized tools to respond more readily to breaks and maintenance repairs.
- ☑ Enhanced access security (i.e., locks, gates, reinstalled missing fence) to the Intake and Water Treatment Plant (WTP).
- ☑ Improved the road to the Intake on the Cowlitz River.
- ☑ Cleared brush and scrap material from WTP grounds.
- ☑ Cleaned the backwash lagoons at the WTP.
- ☑ Replaced the stairs at the WTP.
- ☑ Installed energy efficient lighting at the WTP and Intake.
- ☑ Replaced heaters at the WTP.
- ☑ Organized and deep cleaned the WTP office with plans to paint the interior this year.
- ☑ Repaired service line leaks on Horseshoe Bend and G Street.
- ☑ Repaired existing mainline patch on Olequa Drive.
- ☑ Added new valve when repairing main break on B Street to isolate the line in the future.
- ☑ Installed meter for the Vader wastewater treatment plant.
- ☑ Replaced missing lids on meter boxes.
- ☑ Flushed hydrants.
- ☑ Locating and marking valves--ongoing.
- ☑ Exercised valves for operation.
- ☑ Repairing risers and lids on valves--ongoing.
- ☑ Bled air out of the mains to improve system pressure.
- ☑ Establishing inventory of spare parts.
- ☑ Cross training County staff to help with maintenance and emergency repairs.
- ☑ Drafting Standard Operating Procedures.
- ☑ Working on the plant alarm system for faster notification and to avoid drawdown of the tank.
- ☑ Approved State grant and loan agreements to improve the distribution system.
- ☑ Advertised for design engineering services to prepare construction plans.
- ☑ Prepared the 2010 Water Quality Monitoring Report.
- ☑ Set up the billing software from the City.
- ☑ Sent out bills starting in December 2010.
- ☑ Read meters starting in December 2010.
- ☑ Collecting on delinquent accounts--ongoing.
- ☑ Keeping an updated list of active customers--ongoing.

